## REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated June 16, 2006. Claims 1, 3, 5, 7 to 12 and 14 to 19 and 21 to 28 are pending in the application, of which Claims 1, 3, 5, 12, 19, 21, 23 and 25 to 28 are independent. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Turning to specific claim language, amended independent Claim 1 is directed to an image forming system including a server and client computers and at least one image forming device which communicates with said server, and devices of which one or a plurality can be connected to the server. The system includes input means for inputting to the server a job to be printed by an image forming device; rendering means for rendering the job input by the input means into an image; output means for outputting an image rendered by the rendering means to an image forming device specified by the job; setting means for setting the specified image forming device as an output destination at the server; output destination information holding means for holding a number of image forming devices set as output destinations by the setting means; displaying means for setting dialog on a display unit which shows information of the image forming devices; recognizing means for recognizing a presence of devices connected to the server, and a number thereof connected in response to obtaining instruction to add new image forming devices as output destinations, wherein the instruction is input via said display unit; and determination means for determining a number N of the devices connected to the server that have been recognized by the recognizing means, and a number M of image forming devices already set as output destinations by the holding means and the new image forming device, when the specified image forming device is set as an output destination by the setting means. In an event that the determination means judges M to be less than N, setting of the specified image forming

device as the output destination is permitted, and the number of image forming devices set as output destinations held by the holding means is updated, and, in an event that the determination means judges N and M to be equal, setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is not permitted. The output means outputs the image rendered by the rendering means via the specified image forming device when setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is permitted, and the output means does not output the image rendered by the rendering means via the specified image forming device when setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is not permitted.

In contrast, Conte is concerned with control techniques for program invocation. (See Conte, column 26, lines 38 to 44.) That is, whereas Conte is only concerned with invocation of programs, each of the present independent claims includes a feature used in print job flow control. For example, Claim 1 features an output means that outputs the image rendered by the rendering means via the specified image forming device when setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is permitted, and does not output the image rendered by the rendering means via the specified image forming device when setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is not permitted.

Furthermore, Minari merely discloses a conventional server based printer system without a licensing technique. Therefore, Minari cannot supply that which is missing from Conte, namely recognizing licensing devices coupled to a network and then outputting an image rendered by the rendering means via the specified image forming device when setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is permitted, and not outputting the image rendered by the rendering means via the specified image forming device when setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is not permitted.

Therefore, Conte and Minari, either alone or in combination, do not disclose or suggest all of the features of Claim 1. In light of this deficiency of Minari and Conte, Applicant submits that amended independent Claim 1 is now in condition for allowance and respectfully requests same.

Claims 21, 25 and 26 are directed to a server apparatus, a method, and a computer-readable medium substantially in accordance with the system of Claim 1. Accordingly, Applicant submits that Claims 21, 25 and 26 are also now in condition for allowance and respectfully requests same.

Claim 3 is directed to an image forming system including a server and client computers connected to a network, one or a plurality of image forming devices connected to either the network or the server, and devices of which one or a plurality can be connected to the server and which can be recognized by the server. The system includes input means for inputting to the server a job to be printed by an image forming device; rendering means for rendering the job inputted by the input means into an image; output means for outputting an image rendered by the rendering means to an image forming device specified by the job; setting means for setting the specified image forming device as an output destination at the server; output destination information holding means for holding a number of image forming devices set as output destinations by the setting means; and recognizing means for recognizing a presence of devices connected to the server and a number thereof connected, wherein the server periodically recognizes the number of devices connected to the server using the recognizing means, and determines a number n of recognized devices with a number m of image forming devices set as output destinations held in the output destination information holding means, and, in an event that n is judged to be less than m, a number of image forming devices for distributing and

outputting jobs is restricted to at most the number n of recognized devices by recognizing means, or no jobs are output.

As in Claim 1, Claim 3 features active job control. In Claim 3, however, in an event that n is judged to be less than m, a number of image forming devices for distributing and outputting jobs is restricted to at most the number n of recognized devices by recognizing means, or no jobs are output.

Applicant submits that the discussion from above in regard to Claim 1 applies as well to Claim 3. Accordingly, Applicant submits that amended independent Claim 3 is now in condition for allowance and respectfully requests same.

Claims 27 and 28 are directed to a method and a computer-readable medium, respectively, substantially in accordance with the system of Claim 3. Accordingly, Applicant submits that Claims 27 and 28 are also in condition for allowance and respectfully requests same.

Amended Claim 5 is directed to an image processing device for outputting image data to a plurality of image forming devices. The image processing device includes input means for inputting an image forming job, wherein one of the plurality of image forming devices is specified as an output destination; image processing means for generating image data for the specified image forming device based on the image forming job; image output means for outputting image data generated by the image processing means to the specified image forming device; connecting means for connecting to one or a plurality of devices; and control means for restricting a number of image forming devices capable of receiving image data outputted from the image output means, of the plurality of image forming devices, based on a number of devices connected to the connecting means, wherein, in an event that the number of devices connected to the connecting means is less than a number of the plurality of image forming devices, the control

means selects a number of image forming devices corresponding to a difference in these numbers, and forbids image data outputted from the image output means from transmitting to the selected image forming devices.

As in Claim 1, Claim 5 also includes job control features. Specifically, Claim 5 features that wherein, in an event that the number of devices connected to the connecting means is less than a number of the plurality of image forming devices, the control means selects a number of image forming devices corresponding to a difference in these numbers, and forbids image data outputted from the image output means from transmitting to the selected image forming devices. Accordingly, Applicant submits that the discussion from above in regard to Claim 1 applies as well to Claim 5. Therefore, Applicant submits that amended independent Claim 5 is now in condition for allowance and respectfully requests same.

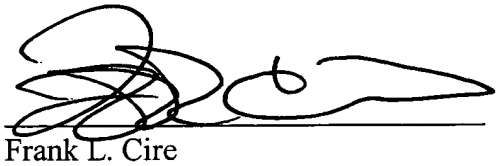
Amended Claims 12 and 19 are directed to a method and a computer-readable medium, respectively, substantially in accordance with the system of Claim 5. Accordingly, Applicant submits that Claims 12 and 19 are also in condition for allowance and respectfully requests same.

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one of the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed allowable for at least the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the allowability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, CA office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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